

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

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INFORMATION REPORT

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Conditions of Life

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the village of PESTY, near SELO KHOROSHI, in the BOGORODSKIY rayon of the KIROVSKAYA oblast.

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(a) The area concerned

The BOGORODSKIY RAJON, where the two villages are situated, is due south of ZUEVKA (on the KIROV - MOLOTOV railway line). It is a large area of small villages with no towns, and the population is engaged entirely in farming and organised into "amalgamated" collective farms.

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[redacted] the people in the whole area were very poor indeed and the conditions prevailing there nowadays were appalling.

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Climatic conditions in this area are not ideal and not as good as in other parts of European Russia. [redacted] the main reason for the present chaotic state of affairs.

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[redacted] elderly peasants in the village the description of life in this area before the revolution, when the peasants were not

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/organised.....

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organised by petty government officials and had enough to eat. [redacted] the collective farm system and the anti-peasant policy of the Soviet Government for most of the present-day ills in the villages.

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(b) KOLKHOZ PESTY

[redacted] This village, about 5 km away from SELO KHOROSHI, consisted of about 25 Russian-type log huts (KHATY) which housed the local KOLKHOZ workers. These were normal KHATY consisting of one room with a Russian stove (PECH) on which everyone slept. These wooden buildings were in a very bad state of repair.

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The conditions at this KOLKHOZ were similar to those at PESTY, with the same shortages of food and clothing.

When the collective farms were amalgamated, the KOLKHOZ BOLSHIE KORYAKI was re-named KOLKHOZ STALINETZ. [redacted] this amalgamation did not improve matters and in many ways the system became even less efficient. For example, when the order was given to amalgamate several of the KOLKHOZY into one large one, many of the outbuildings and barns were simply taken apart for

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firewood and the peasants divided the timber up amongst themselves. The result was that the new enlarged KOLKHOZ was short of buildings for machinery, livestock and stores.

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On certain occasions the KOLKHOZ did make some issues such as 200 grammes of oatmeal per head to those willing to help to gather in the harvest. Otherwise the only item of supply [redacted] was an occasional load of rye straw which had a very limited use. In fact the peasants existed entirely on what they could themselves produce on their small private allotments.

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(e) Clothing

The people were very poorly dressed, mainly in rags or in anything else they could obtain. Certain articles of clothing could be bought on occasions at SELO KHOROSHI, but with the lack of ready cash, few could avail themselves of this shopping facility. Any KOLKHOZNIK possessing a cheap cotton suit was considered well-to-do.

For footwear, home-made bast shoes were still mostly used, and no modern footwear had been introduced.

(f) Food

The KOLKHOZNIKI lived, or rather existed, on what they personally could produce on their private allotments. As they received practically nothing from the local KOLKHOZ, these allotments were their only means of obtaining food and ready cash by selling some of the produce. The usual crops grown on these allotments were rye or some other cereal, potatoes and various vegetables.

[redacted] a cow and a few chickens, which helped the ration but were difficult to feed in wintertime. Money for taxes had also to be found somehow.

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With all these difficulties, [redacted]

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making bread and [redacted] bread always contained a large proportion of other ingredients. These ingredients differed and depended on what was available, but the most usual ones were the following:-

- i) the red-coloured underbark of silver birch trees, dried and made into a powder;
- ii) dried potato peelings made into a powder;
- iii) wild orach (LEBEDA) seeds dried and crushed into powder.

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These were mixed with rye flour and bread was made from the mixture. In very bad times even sawdust from young lime trees, dried, was also used as an admixture.

Several plants found in the fields and woods were also gathered for food and cooked or eaten raw. Some of these were:-

young lime tree leaves
sorrel (SHCHAVIL')
wood sorrel flowers (ZAYACHILY SHCHAVIL')
DUDKI or GIGLI - thick-stemmed plants found in the local forests.

Besides the above plants, various edible fungi and berries were gathered. Some of the mushrooms were dried for winter use.

Bread could be bought at a shop in the SULO KHO OSHI twice per week, but very few of the peasants had the money to buy it.

The most difficult period for food is at the end of winter and the beginning of spring, when many people [redacted] still die from hunger. In the spring many of the peasants go out into the KOLKHOZ fields and dig up frozen potatoes which the KOLKHOZ authorities had not had time to lift before the winter set in. When dug up, these potatoes are white and slimy like a paste, and are eaten raw by these hungry people.

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[redacted]

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[redacted] many of the peasants would not mind being sent to corrective [redacted] camps (ISPRAVITELINO-TUDOVIE LAGERYA), where at least a fixed ration of 600 grammes of bread per day is available.

[redacted]

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